United Nations E/CN.5/2012/NGO/19

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
18 November 2011

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Fiftieth session
1-10 February 2012
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: poverty eradication

Statement submitted by VIVAT International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2012/1.

11-59989 (E) 121211

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Statement
Trafficking and poverty

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right of all people "to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being" for themselves and their families. The lack of this standard of living due to poverty leads many people to emigrate, pursuing a better future.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also recognizes that "everyone has the right to leave any country, including his or her own". Every day some people exercise this right freely, but others are deceived and exploited by unscrupulous people who are traffickers. Migration policies of many countries facilitate the entry of migrants with certain educational and/or professional skills in order to easily add them in their job market, but at the same time they restrain the entry of less educated and unskilled people, most of whom originate in countries plagued by poverty. Preying on the vulnerabilities of those living in poverty, especially women and girls, the traffickers offer the false hope of good jobs, education and the means to assist their struggling families. Once they convince the vulnerable to leave their homes and families, the traffickers make them virtual slaves, subject to abusive and controlled employment. The trafficked individuals live in a world of violence and threats: the traffickers take away their identity documents, cut off contact with family and friends and force them to pay for their own enslavement.

Some people pay an agent to arrange their journey and passage over borders so that they can find employment. Often, however, they do not make the decision to migrate with full knowledge of the conditions that they are likely to encounter. There is a fine line between smuggling and trafficking.

The common elements of trafficking cases are coercion and deception. This includes deception about the nature of the work or study, extreme physical, sexual and psychological abuse, intimidating the victims into silence by threats against them and their families, forcing them to work in deplorable situations, and giving them no choice in their type of work, in a situation of forced labour and debt bondage. When the victims of trafficking in persons are women or children, they often find themselves trapped into forced prostitution or marriage, domestic work and other forms of exploitation.

This is an international crisis that calls for united and decisive action on the part of the international community. The vulnerable must be protected. The traffickers must be stopped. It is with this understanding that we present the following recommendations to address some of the issues faced by trafficked individuals.

- Dedicate more resources to implementation of adequate and effective remedies for the trafficked victims. As Ms. Ngozi Ezeilo, Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, recently reported to the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, "the right to effective remedy for trafficked persons includes compensation ... recovery, restitution, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition ...". Many trafficked persons don't have access to information and legal assistance, which are vital in order to obtain effective remedy.

- Trafficked persons are often wrongly identified as irregular migrants and are detained and deported before they have an opportunity to even consider seeking remedies. They must be given visas to allow them to stay temporarily or permanently in the country in which they have been trafficked. Programmes like the T-visa in the United States of America and the "people trafficking" visa (F-visa) in Australia are examples of good practices that we support.

- Increase the level of awareness and education about trafficking in persons among vulnerable populations, especially those living in poverty. Additionally, public officials, law enforcement and border agents need to be trained in spotting persons who are being or have been trafficked. An international campaign of human trafficking awareness could aid in its prevention. Although the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (www.ungift.org) has begun to create wider awareness of the issues, a website will not reach the potential victims of the identified demographic. At national borders, we can address the issue by presenting information in the form of victim stories, trafficking facts and trafficking assistance agencies to those detained for illegal entry. As awareness grows, the community will form its own leaders who can inform and educate the other members of the community who might be deceived by the false promises of the trafficker.

Note: The statement is endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council: Carmelite NGO, Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Dominican Leadership Conference, Grail, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, National Council of Women of the United States, Salesian Missions, Sisters of Charity Federation, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries and Soroptimist International.